

Madam Speaker, I proudly ask you to join me in commending Alex J. Martin for his accomplishments with the Boy Scouts of America and for his efforts put forth in achieving the highest distinction of Eagle Scout.

CONGRATULATING KATY
RHOADES, ELIZABETH GHELETA
AND PATRICIA BROWN ON BEING
AWARDED A JEFFERSON AWARD
FOR PUBLIC SERVICE

HON. TOM LANTOS

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, April 16, 2007

Mr. LANTOS. Madam Speaker, I rise today to bring attention to three remarkable women in my Congressional District in California. These women are distinguished recipients of the prestigious Jefferson Award for Public Service in 2006. I would like to express my own personal gratitude to these women and share their stories with my colleagues.

Katy Rhoades is an extraordinary volunteer who has devoted herself to improving the quality of life of people with disabilities. She became an advocate for the disabled when her son, Kit, was first diagnosed with spina bifida. Katy left a career in the insurance industry to care full-time for her son. While she worked tirelessly with Kit, she also managed to find the time and energy to work with others with disabilities in San Mateo County. I am happy to announce that her son, now 21, has become a successful, independent young man and is currently enrolled at Cañada College in Redwood City. Katy has continually given of herself, tirelessly advocating for people with disabilities.

Her work on behalf of disabled people includes serving on the San Mateo County

Commission on Disabilities, the Health Plan of San Mateo, the Meals on Wheels Coalition, New Beginning Coalition and the Second Harvest Food Bank. Katy has also worked with the California Children Services and the Far-West Wheelchair Sports Association. Katy developed the "Transition to Independence Fair" to help children with disabilities as they grow into adulthood. This unique fair now takes place every other year and is growing in importance. Katy Rhoades is an incredible ally and friend to people with disabilities. She has made her community in the Bay Area a better place for everyone.

Madam Speaker, Elizabeth Gheleta is another recent winner of the Jefferson Award. She has helped rebuild the lives of thousands of San Mateo County jail inmates and former inmates, and has also provided support and assistance to their children and families.

A long, distinguished career with the San Mateo County Service League has made Elizabeth Gheleta an invaluable and integral part of the agency's history. When Proposition 13 closed down the Service League in 1978, Elizabeth took on a leadership role that salvaged it. She built the Service League into a well-established, non-profit community organization with 25 staff members and over 500 dedicated volunteers.

This tireless and visionary woman expanded local in-jail resources to include educational programs, religious services, substance abuse counseling, and life skills to aid in the transition back into society. Elizabeth's success with the Service League has resulted in similar programs that have given hundreds of former inmates and their families a second chance in life.

Elizabeth Gheleta has spent 38 years with the Service League, and her recent retirement will leave a large void in the agency, but we can all take comfort in the knowledge that she leaves behind a strong and essential pillar of

our community. She refused to give up on prison inmates and has given countless men and women the skills and support they need in order to return to productive lives in our society.

Madam Speaker, the third, and certainly not last, extraordinary woman I want to tell you about is Patricia Brown, who has retired from the Peninsula Conflict Resolution Center after 20 years of service. She has been the Executive Director of PCRC since 1992, guiding the non-profit organization in its mission to provide conflict management and resolution services in San Mateo County. This remarkable organization has grown under Patricia's leadership and today trains people to communicate and solve problems together, through constructive means. Through her vision and commitment, conflict resolution today not only involves adults, but children in school as well.

Patricia is also an active community volunteer, involving herself in the creation and development of a number of partnerships, including development of the Multi-Option Alternative Dispute Resolution Program. She has served on the California Judicial Council's Collaborative Justice Courts Advisory Committee and was involved in an innovative alliance of San Mateo County non-profits known as Thrive. A founding member of the California Dispute Resolution Council and its non-profit partner, the California Dispute Resolution Institute, Patricia can point to countless success stories relating to successful conflict resolution.

Madam Speaker, let me recognize with great pride Katy Rhoades, Elizabeth Gheleta and Patricia Brown, three women who have devoted their lives to making our community a stronger, safer and more vibrant place to live. These women are gems in San Mateo County and an inspiration to all of us. I am honored to be able to highlight their accomplishments.